

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520




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October 19, 1984

MEMORANDUM

TO : Mr. David Whipple
National Intelligence Office
for Counterterrorism
Central Intelligence Agency

FROM : C. Thomas Thorne, Jr. 
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Assessments and Research
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

SUBJECT: Terrorism Threat Warning

Here is our draft proposal for the new coordinated
Terrorism Threat warning. Please look it over and let us know
what you think of it, and if your agency can go along with it.

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DECL: OADR

SECRET**Terrorist Threat Alert/Warnings/Advisories**

The Chairman of the Interagency Group on Terrorism (IGT) has noted that several intelligence agencies, i.e., State SY and INR, CIA, DIA, the Services and even military commands are all sending individual threat warnings to their components overseas. These messages concerning a threat are often based on the same intelligence information, but that fact is sometimes not clear to the post. Thus, duplicatory warning/advisories are sometimes perceived as separate pieces of intelligence corroborating the same threat. The duplication therefore gives more credence than the intelligence actually warrants. Also, sometimes the duplicatory warnings/advisories are not passed to other agencies at posts and Washington. The Chairman of the IGT requested that the intelligence community work out some system to:

- a) assure that threat assessments are coordinated among major elements of the community, and;
- b) assure that an assessment that intelligence does indicate a serious threat be transmitted to posts in a

coordinated and non-duplicatory fashion.

To respond to the IGT Chairman's request, State proposes:

Phase I: Community Coordination. Upon receipt of raw intelligence indicating a possible terrorist threat, any member of the intelligence community should come up on flashboard and ask for assessments by other flashboard stations. When any member believes that the intelligence warrants a terrorism threat warning, he will initiate the warning. That agency or State will then compose a brief warning message referring to the specific intelligence by number, which the post or posts should already have received, and stating that the intelligence community has analyzed the intelligence and believes that the threat is serious. In rare cases where it is not possible to send the raw intelligence to a post, the intelligence will be briefly summarized in the warning message. If possible, the duration of the threat will be specified. This message would then be transmitted to all affected agencies ~~via flashboard~~ with the request that they clear it in their agency with an officer who has been designated to clear such messages. When all clearances or non-clearances have been received, State will immediately transmit (NIACT Immediate, or in rare cases FLASH) the warning message to all necessary addressees. State will request that DIA retransmit the warning message to all

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necessary military addressees. The message will note which members of the intelligence community concurred or did not concur. Further analysis, operational instructions, and requests for additional information regarding the threat could then be transmitted in the usual channels, though State would ordinarily use the terrorism caption (see below) in order to make sure that the necessary addressees and members of the EAC automatically receive the analysis. All further information from various agencies at posts concerning the threat should normally include as addressees all the addressees in the original warning message.

Phase II: Use of "Terror" Caption. Warning messages will be transmitted via a new special caption State message (the actual caption would be "Terdis"). Any message sent via this channel from State will automatically be distributed simultaneously within an embassy to all members of the Embassy (or other post as appropriate) Emergency Action Team

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, and others as designated by the Principal Officer. Such warning messages would also be simultaneously distributed in Washington to all the members of the intelligence community, including the Departments of Justice and Treasury, NSC, and any other Departments with a need-to-know (e.g. Agriculture, Labor, DOE,

etc.)

Other Uses of the Terror Caption

Although beyond the scope of this paper, which specifically deals with threat warnings to posts abroad, it should be noted that State will propose that the Terdis caption may be used by posts to relay to Washington all significant information concerning terrorism. Such Terdis messages would automatically be distributed in Washington to all members of the intelligence community, NSC, and the Offices of Counter Terrorism and Planning and Security, in State, and other offices in DOD as designated by SECDEF. The caption would also be used in other outgoing intelligence analysis or operational messages concerning terrorism, with the same distribution as noted above for outgoing threat warnings. The intent is to disseminate terrorism information to those who need it.

Substitution. The coordinated terrorism threat warning messages, or other messages via the Terdis special caption, would not replace any agency's normal communications with its components overseas. It is understood that each agency has its own special intelligence and administrative needs. However, the transmission of a special Terrorist Warning Threat message via the proposed new Terdis caption would both carry the added

authority and caveat of a coordinated community response, but would also make clear the basis of the intelligence information upon which a warning is issued. Any agency sending subsequent messages, further analysis, operational, or otherwise, in its own channels concerning a specific threat, would reference the coordinated warning message (e.g. ref State 1234 Threat Warning Message), thus making clear the common source of intelligence.

Terminology. State is proposing to scrap the use of the term "threat alert" and use only "threat warning" in the above exercise as suggested by DIA. We also propose that the "threat advisory" category used by DIA be studied by the community as a possible first tier heads up notice, but our inclination is that the nature of terrorism intelligence does not allow for too fine a gradation between advisory and warning. There will be other problems in standardization of terminology which could usefully be addressed as the community works its way into a coordinated process.

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